

Ibrahim Hirsi, *TC Daily Planet*

Congressmember Betty McCollum joined local environmentalists and representatives from the American Lung Association September 29 at Children's Hospital in St. Paul in opposition to a bill recently passed by the U.S. House, which she said would delay the cleanup of dangerous mercury and toxic pollutants from power plants.

The Transparency in Regulatory Analysis of Impacts on the Nation Act was passed September 23. The TRAIN Act — which environmentalists are calling it the "train wreck"— will require a federal interagency committee to analyze the cumulative impact of a number of major regulations recently issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-St. Paul) condemned the House majority Republicans for an "all-out assault" on air quality.

McCollum told a crowd of nearly 20 environmentalists and health workers that the purpose of the TRAIN Act is to prevent the EPA from doing its job: to protect public health. "It will prevent the agency from taking action on cross-state air pollution rules and mercury reduction," she said.

Republicans argue that EPA regulations threaten many American jobs and job creation. They see the new act as an effective way to improve the U.S. economy.

"I firmly believe the American people deserve an honest accounting of how much the Obama Administration's energy and environmental regulations are costing our economy and that is exactly what the TRAIN Act provides," Rep. John Sullivan (R-Okla), who introduced the bill along with Jim Matheson (D-Utah), recently told the Environment News Service. Members from Environment Minnesota and the American Lung Association said they believe the bill puts the interests of America's biggest polluters over those of children, the elderly, and other vulnerable people.

The TRAIN Act allows "the nation's biggest polluters and their allies in Congress to block, delay and rollback the EPA's efforts, limiting the tremendous progress we've made towards cleaner and healthier era in the state," said Robert Moffitt, a spokesperson from the American Lung Association in Minnesota.

A statement from Environment Minnesota said that the Act puts the lives of 139,500 Americans at risk by subjecting to indefinite delay the EPA's regulations against mercury and toxic air pollution.

"The fact is the EPA has no idea how these regulations are impacting global competitiveness, energy and fuel prices, jobs or reliability of the electricity supply - eight of the EPA regulations addressed in this bill will cost a minimum of \$1 billion each on the U.S. economy," Sullivan told Environmental News Service.

A 2010 EPA study shows that the Clean Air Act saved 160,000 American lives, McCollum said, adding, "The Clean Air Act might produce two trillion dollars in economic benefits by 2020."

Politicians have always worked together in a bipartisan way to protect air quality and environment, McCollum said.

"For decades, this has been American's value; it has not been a partisan issue," she said, a remark seconded by Environment Minnesota director Ken Bradley. "It's a shame that Minnesota's history of bipartisan support for clean air and water seems to have been lost," Bradley added. "Because of the influence of big polluters on members of Congress, this has become a partisan battle rather than a shared commitment to public health."